



**UNITED STATES COMMISSION  
FOR THE PRESERVATION OF AMERICA'S HERITAGE ABROAD**

**NEWS RELEASE**

**OCTOBER 30, 2002**

**FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATE**

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**U.S. Signs Cultural Property Agreements with Latvia and Lithuania**

**U.S. Commission Chairman Meets with Presidents of Both Countries**

**U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad  
Chairman Warren L. Miller announced today that the United States has entered  
into separate agreements with the countries of Latvia and Lithuania for preserving  
sites and artifacts important to the cultural heritage of Americans who trace their  
roots to these countries in Northeastern Europe.**

**The agreements place a special focus on cultural property of Jews and other  
groups that were victims of Nazi genocide.**

**Miller signed the agreement with Latvia in its capital, Riga, October 8 with  
Culture Minister Karina Petersone. He signed the agreement with Lithuania in its capital,  
Vilnius, October 15 with Culture Minister Roma Dovydeniene. Both ceremonies were  
witnessed by government and private sector leaders and national news media.**

**In addition to signing the agreements, the Bush Administration official had  
private meetings with the presidents of each of the countries, Her Excellency Vaira Vike-  
Freiberiga of Latvia and His Excellency Valdas Adamkus of Lithuania, on the issues  
raised by the agreements.**

**(MORE)**

## Cultural Property Agreements – Add One

The agreements provide for identification and preservation of historic sites, places of worship, monuments, cemeteries, mass killing sites, and archives. The agreements also commit the countries to protect “cultural heritage” of all national, religious and ethnic groups. Additionally, Joint Cultural Heritage Commissions between the U.S. and each of the Baltic countries were established to oversee the efforts.

Miller termed the agreements “symbolically as well as substantively important,” and said that they would “help preserve a precious legacy for generations to come.”

Commenting on the importance of confronting what happened during the Holocaust in their countries, he said “Openly and truthfully remembering acts of the past – shameful as well as glorious – are hallmarks of a strong and free democratic society.”

While in Riga, Miller also inspected progress on a new memorial in the Rumbula Forest where more than 25,000 Jews were killed during two days in 1941 by Nazis and local collaborators. The Commission is one of the sponsors of the memorial and has raised a substantial portion of the funding for it.

The United States has entered into similar agreements with seven other countries. It is seeking such agreements with 14 additional countries whose populations were victimized by the Holocaust and thereafter by repressive Communist regimes.

The U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America’s Heritage Abroad is charged by law with negotiating agreements with the governments of eastern and central Europe to assure the protection and preservation of sites associated with the heritage of U.S. citizens. In addition to identifying endangered sites, the Commission coordinates privately-funded restoration efforts.